

Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor, July 21, 2010.
All rights reserved.

Violence and the Invisibility Cloak of God's Grace

By Elise L. Moore, CSB

During the Cuban missile crisis, our elementary school held weekly safety drills. We practiced hiding under desks or sitting in the hallways with our backs to the wall. How that was supposed to save us from an actual missile strike, I still can't fathom. But it gave those in authority the feeling they were doing something to keep children safe from harm.

But safety from violent attack doesn't come from hiding under a desk. True safety comes from God.

Perhaps recent school drills in Mexico are more practical. Children are being taught to dive to the floor and cover their heads at the first sound of gunshots. This might be useful whether in school or in the community. With more than 5,000 Mexicans killed in drug-related violence in the first six months of 2010, the concern of being hit by random gunfire is palpable. Such fear isn't limited to Mexico. Unexpected gunfire erupts too frequently in the United States and other countries, catching innocent children and citizens unaware.

Protecting ourselves from violence is certainly a priority. Caring enough to protect others from violence can be a blessing. Prayer can help prevent violence. Mentally affirming that there can be no violent impulse is a simple but effective prayer.

I've prayed along these lines: "Heavenly Father, I pray that there be no violent impulse in my heart or in anyone's heart in Mexico or in the world. Remove revenge from human thought. Give each one the wisdom and moral courage needed to defeat evil thoughts and acts."

Such prayer isn't naive. It supports the divine power of good that can cut through layers of arrogance and fear. God is the divine power and source of

grace operating in every human heart. God neutralizes destructive thoughts. Praying people can use this divine power and help wrap a mental shield of safety around all God's children.

When a gun battle swept into the neighborhood of her grandchildren's nursery school, a Christian Scientist in Mexico, who is a friend of mine, began earnestly praying for the safety of the children. She persisted in affirming God's presence, God's supreme authority and government. Several hours later, she learned that gunmen had entered the preschool only to discover that the teachers had silently and wisely removed the children out a side exit to safety. No child was taken hostage or harmed.

Prayer can be an effective mental force for good that counters physical force. In my prayers for myself, for Mexico, and for my own community, I have prayed with this Bible verse: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Cor. 9:8). Mexico and Mexicans are able to defeat violence through God's grace. Grace is present right where evil appears to be. Grace, according to Strong's Concordance, is "the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life."

Christ is the presence of grace reflected in harmonious lives. Christ is the divine influence giving hope to the hopeless and transforming even the most intransigent heart. God is able to multiply grace until every heart is touched and filled by this divine influence. The good that is lasting and abounds certainly comes through Christ, the divine message from God to humanity. God's gracious Christ protects what is good. God's gracious Christ gives everyone the means to be filled with good.

If violence erupts despite all our prayers, I pray for the invisibility of good in the face of evil. Mary Baker Eddy, the author of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," wrote about "that which is invisible to the uninspired thought" (p. 573). Just as an object might be invisible in a fog, so the innocent child of God can be invisible to those engulfed in the fog of selfishness, revenge, or fear.

Perhaps it was this divine invisibility that enabled Jesus to pass unnoticed through a violent mob (see John 8:59). Perhaps it was the same divine invisibility that enabled the children in Mexico to escape unseen while dozens of gunmen battled in the streets around them. Praying to know that

good is invisible to evil can help the innocent pass unharmed and unseen to safety.

Regardless of the nightly news, the impulse of God's love gentles violent impulses. God's abundant grace is embracing and protecting each one in the cloak of divine safety.